



Working Together on the Impacts of Alzheimer's

The transformational and collective impact of ACT on Alzheimer's work in preparing Minnesota communities for all that dementia entails has set the stage for the Dementia Friendly America initiative. Dementia Friendly America will build upon the ACT model of a rigorous community engagement process complemented by sector-specific tools and resources. Learn more in the following release about the national initiative being announced at today's White House Conference on Aging:



DEMENTIA FRIENDLY AMERICA INITIATIVE LAUNCHES IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE U.S., FROM MARYLAND TO CALIFORNIA

First-of-its-kind national effort announced at today's White House Conference on Aging

Communities pledge to support people with dementia and foster quality of life for them and their caregivers

Washington, DC - Across the United States, an estimated 5.1 million people age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, and the number is expected to reach 7.1 million in the next decade. Nearly 60 percent of people with dementia live in their own communities, and one in seven live alone, creating an urgent need for communities to support people with dementia and their caregivers.

In a groundbreaking national effort, communities across the United States - from cities, to counties, to an entire state - are heeding that call and today announced that they will become "dementia friendly." A dementia friendly community is defined as one that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals with dementia and their families, provides supportive options, and fosters quality of life. The announcement is being made today at the [White House Conference on Aging](#) by Frank Fernandez, CEO of Blue Plus, a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota health plan that is committed to supporting the development of dementia friendly communities and is working towards becoming a dementia friendly business and employer.

"Alzheimer's disease and dementia can be devastating to American families, but we are not powerless to support those living with the disease, their caregivers and loved ones," said Senator Bill Frist, national spokesperson for Dementia Friendly America. "Starting in these communities, we're building a nationwide effort to educate Americans about dementia, equip business owners and first responders to recognize and assist those with memory loss, and empower people with Alzheimer's and dementia to engage independently and safely in community life for as long as possible."

The communities include: Tempe, AZ; Santa Clara County, CA; Denver, CO; Prince George's County, MD; Knoxville, TN; and the state of West Virginia.

Led by the Dementia Friendly America initiative (DFA), the communities are taking action by leveraging tailored resources in business, community-based services and supports, faith communities, health care communities, legal and financial services, local government and residential settings.

The work toward dementia friendliness will involve:

- Raising awareness about dementia and transforming attitudes
- Having supportive options that foster quality of life
- Supporting caregivers and families touched by the disease
- Promoting meaningful participation in community life
- Reaching those who are underserved

"Becoming dementia friendly must be a priority for all of our hometowns in order to remove stigma, enable people with Alzheimer's to come out of the shadows and engage in their communities, and help families effectively manage all that comes with the critical task of caregiving," said George Vradenburg, founder of USAgainstAlzheimer's, who worked closely with DFA to launch the effort and was a major catalyst behind its inception. "This hometown Dementia Friendly America initiative sends a message to American families experiencing dementia: 'You are not alone, we are your neighbors, we care about you, and we want to help'."

DFA is building on the leadership of [ACT on Alzheimer's](#) and 34 communities in Minnesota actively working to become dementia friendly. The model employed in Minnesota includes a rigorous, community-based process that brings people together to help a community create a supportive environment for people with dementia. More than 50 organizations - including AARP, the Alzheimer's Association, CVS/Caremark, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National League of Cities, and USAgainstAlzheimer's - have joined forces to make dementia friendly communities a reality across America through DFA, with the goal of piloting 15 communities by 2016.

For example, in Prince George's County, Maryland, a movement is emerging spurred by County leadership to promote dementia friendliness in all sectors of the community. There are an estimated 99,000 Marylanders living with Alzheimer's today and the number is projected to rise to 130,000 by 2025. In 2014, there were 289,000 Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers in the state, generating \$329 million hours of unpaid care.

"As a member of a family who is impacted by Alzheimer's, I know firsthand the needs of both those who suffer from the disease and their loved ones who become critical caregivers," said Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. "As a local government leader, I believe that all levels of government should do more on this issue by working in collaboration with the non-profit, faith, social services and science communities to assist our fellow residents who need support and assistance. I want to thank President Obama and the White House for hosting this important conference. Prince George's County is proud to partner with DFA in their efforts to raise awareness about Alzheimer's and related dementias. We are committed to effectively meeting the needs of our citizens by helping to provide the best quality of life for those living with this illness."

Another example is the work underway in Denver, Colorado, a state where over 234,000 caregivers are providing support to those with dementia. Building on the unique assets of the state of Colorado and the vibrant urban city of Denver, local leaders are stepping up to work toward dementia friendliness.

"Denver and the broader Colorado community have four pertinent assets that enable us to pursue dementia friendliness in partnership with the Dementia Friendly America initiative. We have a robust Baby Boomer population, a continuous Millennial migration, an intense focus on quality of life, and supportive startup and technology communities," said Amanda Cavaleri, CEO of Connect the Ages and a leader of the Denver DFA pilot community. "With that combination of assets, I believe Denver and the state of Colorado are uniquely positioned to take an entrepreneurial, technological, and intergenerational approach to working toward dementia friendliness, so we are thrilled to be a part of this movement."

"As a person living with Alzheimer's, words cannot express what the Dementia Friendly America initiative means to me," said Ron Grant of Oklahoma, member of DFA. "The fact that there are so many people working so hard to help and improve the quality of life for us with the disease and our caregivers. To be able to stay in my own home in my own community for as long as possible is very comforting, and I thank the DFA members for working together to achieve that. We are getting closer to this becoming a reality."

DFA is set to launch a web-portal in late summer, which will include sector-specific tools and resources for those interested in working toward dementia friendliness. Those interested in learning more about the initiative are encouraged to visit the website, www.dfamerica.org, which will be updated on an ongoing basis as the tools and resources are being developed.

The Dementia Friendly America initiative (DFA) is a cross-sector, national effort leveraging tailored resources and tools to equip all community sectors to support those with dementia and their caregivers and families. By 2016, the Dementia Friendly America initiative will pilot 15 dementia friendly communities across the nation.